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EMPOWERING WOMEN, BROADENING HORIZONS

An Independent Evaluation of the Mentoring Women in Business Programme



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About the partners:

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Qualcomm believes access to advanced wireless technologies can improve people’s lives. Qualcomm Wireless Reach is a strategic initiative that brings wireless technology to underserved communities globally. Wireless Reach invests in programmes that foster entrepreneurship, aid in public safety, enhance the delivery of health care, enrich teaching and learning and improve environmental sustainability.

Our partnership has enabled over 200 women entrepreneurs in Malaysia to participate as mentees as well as a number of Qualcomm employees who participate as mentors.

For more information, please visit www.wirelessreach.com and follow us on Twitter at @QCWirelessReach.

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Our partnership has offered more than 275 Bank of America employees the opportunity to join the programme as a mentor and use their expertise to support a woman entrepreneur.

For more information, please visit www.bankofamerica.com/about and follow us on Twitter at @BofA_News.

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Marsh & McLennan colleagues around the world are united by a common purpose - to make a meaningful difference to the communities where we live and work. Our efforts are focused on two strategic areas that align with our businesses, collective skills and knowledge – education and mentoring, and disaster preparedness and recovery. Through our long-term partnership with the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women we are able to make a positive, sustainable impact on our global and local communities.

Our partnership has enabled over 90 colleagues to participate as mentors, building their confidence and skills whilst empowering women entrepreneurs to thrive and develop stronger communities for themselves and their families. We are proud to support the research and findings undertaken in this report.

For more information, please visit www.mmc.com and follow us on Twitter at @MMC_Global.

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Gina Vun (pictured centre), founder of Exotic Borneo Treasures, an online jewellery boutique in Malaysia

Photo by Suzanne Lee

Introduction

No country in the world has achieved gender parity in economic activity. Worldwide, women earn less than men, are more likely to work in vulnerable, informal and unprotected jobs, have less access to assets, property and financial services, hold fewer senior management and leadership positions, are more likely to experience discrimination in the workplace and undertake the majority of unpaid care work.

Women’s entrepreneurship

Gender gaps are particularly pronounced in specific areas of economic activity, and in particular regions of the world. Research shows that women entrepreneurs in developing and emerging economies face a number of barriers to establishing and growing successful enterprises, including:ⁱ



Inability to access networks



Lack of mobility



Discrimination and impoverishment



Inadequate infrastructure



Weak institutions



Educational inequalities



Domestic and caregiving responsibilities



Shortage of capital and inability to access financial networks



Lack of role models

There are around eight to ten million formal women-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in emerging markets (representing 31 to 38% of all SMEs in emerging markets). But their average growth rate is significantly lower than that of SMEs run by men.ⁱⁱ

Access to finance is a major constraint to women entrepreneurs. The International Finance Corporation estimates that around 5.3 to 6.6 million women-owned SMEs in developing economies (which amount to 63 to 69% of women-owned SMEs) are unserved or underserved by financial institutions. This represents a financing gap of US\$260 to US\$320 billion.ⁱⁱⁱ



Nina Patil, co-founder of Fresh Express Logistics, a grape-exporting company in India

Photo by Atul Loke

A quantum leap

The issue of women's economic empowerment has gathered significant momentum in recent years. Imperatives to drive progress on women's economic equality are enshrined in the new Sustainable Development Goals, which were launched in 2015 as a means of driving global development on an ambitious scale. And, in January 2016, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the first-ever High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment to mobilise concrete actions aimed at closing economic gender gaps that persist around the world. Speaking at the launch of the panel, he said:

"The empowerment of the world's women is a global imperative. Yet despite important progress in promoting gender equality, there remains an urgent need to address structural barriers to women's economic empowerment and full inclusion in economic activity. If the world is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we need a quantum leap in women's economic empowerment."^{iv}

The power of parity

The impetus to realise gender parity in economic activity is two dimensional. Firstly, it is a matter of human rights. Women deserve to participate in society and the economy on an equal footing with men. They deserve equal access to decent work, fair wages, freedom from discrimination and financial independence.

Secondly, a compelling body of evidence shows that women's economic security generates positive ripple effects on development outcomes and economic growth. For example, research by the McKinsey Institute states that bridging the gender gap in economic activity could add US\$28 trillion to annual global GDP by 2025 – equivalent to the combined US and China economies today.^v

The message is clear: breaking down the barriers to women's economic activity is crucial to creating a more equal and productive future for all.

The potential of mentoring

Mentoring can be a powerful tool for supporting women entrepreneurs as they break down barriers that prevent them from leading their businesses effectively.

While women entrepreneurs face a range of factors that can inhibit business sustainability and success, research suggests that these are not necessarily disabling if the entrepreneur possesses strong leadership skills, resourcefulness, resilience and professional relationships.^{vi} A fruitful mentoring relationship can enable a woman entrepreneur to build the leadership abilities, confidence and self-belief, networks and flexibility that are critical to her long-term viability as an entrepreneur. Mentoring provides a source of support and space for reflection, critical thinking and exploration of different solutions to challenges.

Mentoring also provides a useful opportunity for the employees and professionals who serve as mentors to learn and gain a new perspective, and holds potential for their development.



Sofia Cruz del Río Castellanos (pictured right), founder of Mexikatekatl, which supports Mexican artisans to supply their products to the tourist industry

Photo by Rodrigo Cruz

About this report

Motivated by a belief that mentoring can support women entrepreneurs as they develop their skills, confidence, networks and enterprises, in 2010 the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women began developing an online mentoring scheme focused on women who run micro, small and medium enterprises in developing and emerging markets. In the programme's first two years, anecdotal mentor and mentee feedback indicated that their mentoring relationships had generated some positive outcomes for both the mentees and mentors.

To better understand the results of the programme's model and the potential of mentoring, the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women commissioned external consulting teams to review the outcomes achieved by the programme's first five cohorts of mentee and mentor graduates, position the programme within the wider landscape of mentoring schemes and make recommendations on how mentoring can be used for mentee and mentor development.

This work was conducted in phases between 2014 and 2016. In summary, the consulting teams undertook the following work:

2014

- Analysed baseline and end-line survey data from the mentees and mentors who graduated from the programme between 2012 and 2013, and conducted phone interviews to inform the production of a follow-on survey;

2015

- Independently surveyed this same group of alumni mentees and mentors to explore their trajectories and reflections one or more years after graduation, and analysed the data;

2016

- Interviewed current and alumni mentees and mentors to obtain feedback and develop a series of case studies; sent out a short, online survey to international mentoring programme management teams to develop and analyse a comparison data set; and conducted a landscape and literature review on the value of mentoring in women's economic empowerment;
- Compiled the strands of work outlined above to produce this report and make recommendations on whether and how mentoring can be a tool for empowerment and growth more broadly.

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women commissioned this report to highlight the potential that mentoring holds and showcase the work of its Mentoring Women in Business Programme. The report:

- Outlines the programme's model, and its approach to mentoring, growth and reach;
- Summarises the outcomes achieved by mentees and mentors who graduated from the programme between 2012 and 2013 and their reflections one or more years after finishing the programme;
- Presents case studies on mentee-mentor pairs to illustrate the value and potential in global, online mentoring;
- Provides an overview of other mentoring schemes that focus on women entrepreneurs and/or are online;
- Proposes that mentoring be adopted as a tool for the empowerment and growth of women entrepreneurs in developing and emerging economies, as well as for the inspiration and development of employees who serve as mentors.



Gloria Kamanzi Uwizera, CEO of Glo Creations textile and design printing company in Rwanda

Photo by Tom Gilks

About the Mentoring Women in Business Programme

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women was established in 2008, with the mission of empowering women entrepreneurs in developing and emerging economies. Its vision is a world where women have equal opportunities to establish and grow businesses, resulting in a brighter future for women and their communities.

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women supports women entrepreneurs in developing and emerging markets to access the skills, technology, networks and financial services they need to become successful small and growing business owners, contribute to their economies and have a stronger voice in their societies. To date, the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women has reached over 136,000 women in more than 90 countries.

Working in partnership with local and international non-profit organisations, the private and public sector, the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women channels its projects through three programmes: the Enterprise Development Programme, the Mobile Technology Programme and the Mentoring Women in Business Programme.

The Mentoring Women in Business Programme

Since it was piloted in 2010, the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women's Mentoring Women in Business Programme has carved out a unique space in the online mentoring field. It has supported over 2,000 women entrepreneurs in 90 developing and emerging markets, and has recruited and trained over 2,000 mentors from over 45 countries.



"Giving women the chance to become financially independent and make the most of their talents is the key to higher living standards and stronger economies."

Cherie Blair, Founder

How does the Mentoring Women in Business Programme work?

The Mentoring Women in Business Programme matches women entrepreneurs in developing and emerging economies with men and women mentors around the world.

Women entrepreneurs are looking for support during their entrepreneurial journeys. They join the programme to reflect, grow as leaders and find solutions to challenges across different aspects of their businesses, including marketing, communications, technology, accounting, finance and human resources. Mentors have at least seven years' experience and come from diverse sectors.

The one-on-one mentoring relationship is at the heart of the programme. Over the course of a year, women work online with a dedicated mentor, using communication tools like Skype or Google Hangouts. They spend two hours each month working on an action plan that revolves around the mentee's business and professional development needs, as well as the mentor's own expertise and learning objectives. The programme's 'relationship support' team provides dedicated support to each mentee and mentor, and closely tracks their progress during their year in the programme.

Mentees and mentors also become part of a global community of committed, ambitious entrepreneurs who share knowledge through a bespoke online platform.

Through the platform's community forum, participants can become invested in each other's success, offer peer support and build their networks locally and globally. The platform also houses a wide range of resources including videos, webinars, articles, templates, working groups on business topics, participant profiles and trainings.

Training is an integral part of the programme. When they join the programme, mentors and mentees undertake three hours of training on best practices in mentoring, which helps to set expectations and ensure they have techniques to build a successful mentoring relationship.

Monthly webinars on business and inspirational topics give participants and alumni front-row access to inspirational experts and industry leaders. This offers a chance to build new skills, connect, ask questions and share ideas. Local events provide mentees and mentors with an opportunity to connect in person.

Online mentoring supports those who might be excluded due to gender, location or time constraints to participate in mentoring relationships and benefit from personalised support. By building skills and passion for mentoring, mentees are encouraged to go on to mentor others, creating cycles of knowledge-transfer and support.

What is the aim of the programme?

For mentees, the programme provides an opportunity to:



Boost their confidence



Build their business, leadership and mentoring abilities



Expand their networks



Access new information



Reflect, strategise and problem-solve



Tap into a critical support system



Valuable learning and growth opportunities



Inspiration for their own work



Opportunities to tap into a global community and network



Flexibility to volunteer and share their expertise without leaving their desks



Handmade goods sold by Mexikatekatl, a Mexican company founded by mentee Sofia Cruz del Río Castellanos

Photo by Rodrigo Cruz

Mentoring landscape review

To put the Mentoring Women in Business Programme in context, the consulting team completed a mapping exercise of 21 other mentoring schemes that focus on women entrepreneurs, are in developing or emerging economies and/or are online. The mapping both reviewed programmes in the public domain and drew on data collected through a survey designed by the consultants.

Managers of 15 of the 21 programmes completed a survey detailing the aims, format, approach and techniques used in their programmes. This section includes the findings and examples from this exercise and outlines the characteristics that formal mentoring programmes should demonstrate.

This review shows that the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women's Mentoring Women in Business Programme occupies a unique place within the mentoring field and among programmes using mentoring for the development of women entrepreneurs.

Characteristics of formal mentoring programmes

Formal mentoring programmes are extraordinarily diverse in nature. Aspects of this diversity include: cultures, geography, philosophy, context, approach and the ways in which managers and organisations have chosen to design their programmes.

The context of these programmes is often varied, meeting the needs of a variety of people, including those in business, the community, education, entrepreneurship, executive leadership, government, nursing and psychology.

Relationships are frequently facilitated face-to-face, via Skype, social media, telephone, email or through a range of all of these channels.

Usually, formal programmes have a recognised structure and processes to create effective mentoring relationships, including evaluation of the impact of mentoring from a multi-stakeholder perspective. Formal mentoring tends to involve:

- A programme team, with identified roles and responsibilities;
- Input from a wide range of stakeholders;
- An overarching strategy with clearly articulated drivers and objectives;
- A coherent programme framework which identifies elements of the programme, resources and key stakeholders;
- Training materials addressing core topics, including the impact of culture on the style of mentoring;
- An evaluation strategy, supported by appropriate tools and techniques.

Comparative formal mentoring programmes

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women's Mentoring Women in Business Programme is uniquely positioned among those operating in a similar developmental space. Of the 21 formal programmes analysed, the Mentoring Women in Business Programme is the only one focused solely on the development of women entrepreneurs in developing and/or emerging economies, where relationships are facilitated online and are centrally managed by a London-based team.

Format

Of those reviewed, four programmes are dedicated to women entrepreneurs. A far greater number of programmes are dedicated to women or male entrepreneurs (62%).

Very few programmes are conducted solely online (10%), with the vast majority offering a mixed approach to mentoring communication, including regular face-to-face contact. Over 60% of the programmes analysed facilitate face-to-face mentoring relationships.

While there are many benefits of face-to-face mentoring, it does limit the potential to reach women in remote locations and restricts the pool of mentors with whom they can be matched. A local mentor may have more awareness of the local business culture, but working with a mentor from further afield could open the mentee's eyes to opportunities beyond their own environment.

Reach and resources

When compared with the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women's programme, very few other programmes have a comparable scope in terms of the number of participants and geographical spread. Equally, the staff who run, manage and deliver other programmes are usually fewer in number and under resourced. Mentoring supervision is an important aspect of any programme, but organisations are often unable to dedicate the resources needed to support this function. However, the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women's programme dedicates a whole team to managing the mentoring relationships of their participants and position this as a key part of their model.



Members of the Mentoring Women in Business Programme team celebrate the programme reaching its 2,000th mentee
Photo by the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women

Technology and matching

The degree to which programmes use technology to support both programme teams and participants varies enormously.^{vii} This includes the extent to which programmes use technology to support matching participants and undertake ongoing evaluation of their relationships.^{viii} Matching individuals electronically, when they have never met, is one of the biggest challenges of online mentoring. The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women's team uses a unique matching algorithm, supported with team insights, which helps improve the chances of a 'relationship fit'. The programme has also built its own user management system, which enables the team to closely track the progress of mentee-mentor pairs both during and after their time in the programme. The programme has a software developer on its team and refines the web applications it uses on an ongoing basis to optimise performance and expand functionality.

Management

The number of times programme teams check in with mentees and mentors varies. The majority of relationships last 12 months and most evaluation is monthly. This can prompt mentors and mentees to review their relationships and improve how they work together.

Few programme teams evaluate their mentoring programme as frequently and for as long as the Mentoring Women in Business Programme, which requires mentees to complete tracking forms one, four and a half, and eight months in to their mentoring relationships. These forms tell the team whether the pairs are meeting, how they are making progress on their action plan and if they need any additional resources. The team reads each response and follows up by email, Skype or phone, as needed.

If mentees don't fill in their forms, the team follows up to ensure that the mentoring process is on track and offer extra support. In addition, they check in with mentors by email three times during their mentoring relationships. They also have a 'help desk' staffed by relationship support officers who respond to queries from mentees and mentors on an ongoing basis. At the end of the 12-month relationships, the team asks mentees and mentors to complete a final feedback form, which links back to baseline data taken at the application stage.



Mentees use online meeting tools in order to hold sessions with their mentors and connect across borders | Photo by YPVWM

Local partners

The majority of international programmes reported challenges working through local intermediaries. Some allocate a significant part of their resources to local partner education and development. There is no discernible pattern, however, with regard to what makes an ideal partner, what will support them best and how responsibilities should be distributed between the local partners and the centre. This would be a useful area for future research.

Further mentee and mentor participation

Encouraging mentees to become mentors is an effective way of harnessing the talents of an existing pool of mentees and growing the pool of suitable mentors. Programmes vary considerably in how much importance they attach to this.

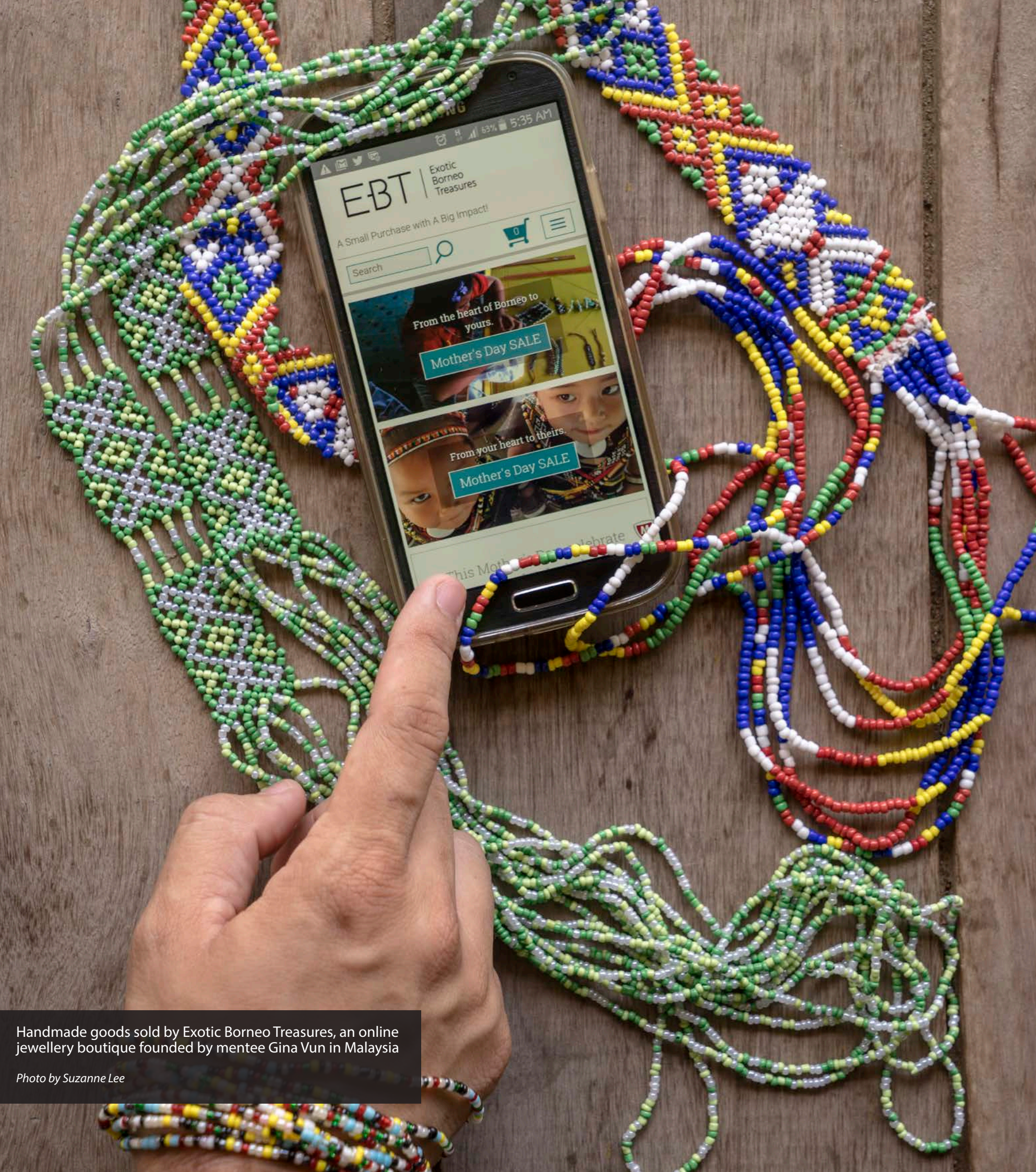
The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women strongly encourages mentees to share their knowledge and go on to mentor others. They also give mentees and mentors the opportunity to stay in the programme for multiple years.

Other multi-country and localised mentoring programmes are exploring the potential benefits of accrediting mentors as a means of recognising their achievements and creating professional development ladders.

Impact

There is still a lack of credible information about the impact of mentoring on mentees' businesses and wider society. When asked about the challenges programme managers face in relation to this issue, the majority of those who participated in the landscape survey said they lacked the resources to properly evaluate their mentoring schemes and faced challenges finding funding to conduct these activities.

There is a strong case for collaboration between leading mentoring organisations to consolidate impact data. One of the benefits of this would be to give funders a clearer picture of what their support is achieving, and make a stronger case for scaling up programmes. It would be advisable to create a common set of metrics to include, where possible, estimates of impact on local economies.



Handmade goods sold by Exotic Borneo Treasures, an online jewellery boutique founded by mentee Gina Vun in Malaysia

Photo by Suzanne Lee

Findings on the outcomes of the Mentoring Women in Business Programme

This section highlights the outcomes achieved by the first five groups of mentees and mentors to graduate from the Mentoring Women in Business Programme. It is based on data that was collected and analysed in two phases:

- **Phase 1:** 390 mentees and mentors who graduated from the programme in 2012 and 2013 were surveyed about their experiences. Data was taken at the application stage^x (baseline) and when mentees and mentors graduated (12 months).^x The data was collected by the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women's team and includes self-reporting by mentees and mentors. It was analysed by the consulting team in 2014.
- **Phase 2:** The same group of mentees and mentors was surveyed one to three years after their graduation.^{xi} The data was submitted anonymously and analysed independently by the consulting team in 2015.

The consulting team also conducted phone and Skype interviews with mentees and mentors to obtain further feedback and give context to the survey findings.

The evidence indicates that the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women's Mentoring Women in Business Programme has been a success. Overall, the mentee and mentor reports are extremely positive, both about their experiences generally and in relation to the development of specific skills, competencies, confidence and networks. The data evaluated here indicates that the Mentoring Women in Business Programme benefits mentees and mentors, both during and after the programme, and that the programme has a substantial ripple effect where impact is broadened by mentees and mentors going on to share knowledge and mentor others.



Mentees at a pitching workshop in Kuala Lumpur

Photo by Reza Ali for the Foundation for Women's Education and Vocational Training

Overview

The mentees and mentors

Mentees came from more than 30 countries. They ranged in age from 21 to 76, with most between 27 and 40 years old. Mentees came from a wide variety of business sectors, with the largest groups in consulting, education and food/drink. Just under 8% of mentees had a high school diploma or less. Mentees had been in business for between one and 22 years before joining the programme, and 39% had another job in addition to running their business.

Mentees started their businesses for a range of reasons. Over half (54%) wanted to bring a product or service to market which they believed would help people and a similar number (53%) wanted the independence of running their own business. Other mentees were motivated by helping other women or needing money.

Mentors also came from over 30 different countries. Most mentors came from a management (34%) or human resources/professional coaching background (20%), and were between 35 and 45 years old. They were able to request the business sector in which they wished to mentor. Mentors were both men and women. Over half (54%) had earned a master's degree.

The mentoring relationship

A good relationship fit was often immediately evident to both parties, though the match wasn't always evaluated on the basis of industry or skill level, but on personal issues, like values, characteristics and personality. Given the cultural and geographic distances involved, there were surprisingly few reports of matching issues between mentees and mentors, and they experienced few issues related to culture or language.

As with the vast majority of formal mentoring programmes, some mentoring pairs did not succeed in creating a working relationship, and, in some cases, it took a bit of time to navigate the relationship. Some pairs reported frustrations with technology, connectivity and differing expectations. In Phase 2, some mentees and mentors reported different assessments of the goals set at the start of their mentoring relationships. This would be an area for future training and development, as all mentors and mentees should be able to work together to set clear objectives for their mentoring relationships.

Despite challenges, most mentors and mentees eventually developed a rapport, found common ground and developed the chemistry needed to progress.

The Phase 1 data showed that:

- 92% of mentors and 82% of mentees reported satisfaction with their match;
- 72% of mentees and mentors reported meeting at least once a month;
- 36% reported meeting weekly or fortnightly.

"My mentee and I commented various times [that] the match was almost uncanny. Not only did we get along very well with regard to the business aspect of the relationship, but our personalities seemed to match in an unusual way."

"Our backgrounds were totally different so it took some time to understand working conditions."

Mentee and mentor satisfaction

Mentees and mentors reported a high level of satisfaction with the various elements of the programme, including their matches, available tools and support from the programme team.

At Phase 1, 94% of mentees and 90% of mentors said they were satisfied with the programme. Ninety-four per cent of mentees and 100% of mentors were satisfied with the support provided by the programme's team, and over 90% of mentees rated the programme's online tools favourably.

At Phase 2, 91% of mentees said that their mentors fulfilled their expectations for the programme and 84% felt that being a graduate of the programme had enhanced their credibility in the eyes of others.

Though a small sample of 19 male mentors made it difficult to draw wide conclusions, there was no discernible difference in satisfaction or outcomes based on the gender of the mentor.

Ripple effect

The programme has had a substantial extended effect in terms of spreading knowledge and broadening impact, both because mentors and mentees continue to communicate with each other after graduation and because many have gone on to mentor others.

At Phase 2, 80% of mentees said that they had passed along what they learned to others in their communities and 50% were mentoring others. Forty-seven per cent were still using the programme's online platform.

Fifty-one per cent of mentors reported that they were still communicating with their mentee. A third of all mentors were still mentoring through the programme and nearly a quarter had gone on to mentor in other programmes.

Mentee outcomes

The consulting team reviewed development reported by mentees in six areas: confidence, business and leadership skills, networks and market reach, strategy, business sustainability and access to capital. Evidence indicates that mentees achieved results in five of the six areas, and that the majority of mentees (96%) sustained or grew their enterprises after graduating from the programme.

Confidence and self-worth

Mentees reported increased confidence as the result of their mentoring relationships. The Phase 1 data showed that 96% of mentees reported gaining confidence and a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. The Phase 2 data showed that 96% of mentees felt that their mentors made them feel good about themselves.

Similarly, mentors often said the best outcome of their experience was watching their mentee increase in confidence.

“Most of all my mentor has helped me increase my self-confidence as a business woman and guided me very well on several issues not just on the goals I laid out.”

Capacity

Overall, mentees were able to acquire skills through the programme and their mentoring relationships.

At Phase 1, 90% of mentees reported gaining business skills. Eighty-seven per cent felt they had improved their understanding of strategy, 74% felt they improved their understanding of marketing and 70% felt they improved their understanding of management. Ninety per cent felt that they had achieved business goals and found ways around barriers they were facing.

At Phase 2, 92% of mentees reported that they had gained skills through the programme that helped them in their businesses.

Networks and market reach

At Phase 1, 80% of mentees reported that their networks had expanded during their time in the programme. Eighty-five per cent reported gaining clients and 77% reported finding ways to access new markets.

At Phase 2, 35% of mentees had started working internationally since graduating from the programme, 29% were still communicating with other mentees and 13% were doing business with people they had met through the programme.

Strategic perspective

Mentees reported significant progress in formal planning and strategic skills, which bodes well for concrete achievement in the future.

At Phase 2, 86% of mentees felt their mentor had challenged them to think further and 91% reported that their mentor had helped them to professionalise their business.

Seventy per cent had completed a formal business plan. Of these, 45% actively used and updated their plan regularly and 52% referred to their plan occasionally to assess progress against goals. Those who had not finished their business plan were sceptical about the need for one.

Specific strategic skills gained by mentees were related to a wide range of issues, including pricing plans, cost reduction, resource allocation and staffing structures.

“It was interesting to see that over the course of the mentorship the initial goals were losing a bit of their relevance. My mentee initially thought that growth by a certain volume was her main goal, but we both discovered that other ‘tasks’ had to be tackled in order to reach that goal. This included the involvement of her team, differentiation of her target group, creating a market, sharpening the product, and working on the brand. By taking a more holistic approach, we noticed that the growth goal could come as a natural consequence of all the other initiatives.”

Some new strategies or solutions adopted by mentees resulted in slowed or delayed results on certain indicators. For example, one mentor supported her mentee to pursue a few big clients rather than many smaller ones. This strategy was successful, bringing more money into the firm, but may not have produced a large increase in the number of customers or employees.

Business sustainability

Due to the fluctuations commonly faced in business, this section focuses on business outcomes that were reported at Phase 2, one to three years after the mentees had graduated from the programme.

Business data and reported perceptions suggest that the programme had a positive impact on enterprise viability and formalisation.

By Phase 2, 96% of mentees were still running their businesses. Most mentees (85%) reported formally registering their business, representing an increase of over 30% in the number of mentees who had been registered at the time of application.

Most mentees reported business growth, with 76% of mentees reporting some increase in revenue since they joined the programme. Given that some mentees were running small businesses, some had been in business for less than five years and others were running larger businesses, it is difficult to report a figure for average or median revenue growth.

Mentees reported that they were contributing to job growth, though much of the work their businesses have generated was still informal. Due to the variety of business types and sizes, employment was measured across five categories, including: workers paid a wage, workers paid by piece, workers paid a wage and by piece, salaried workers and those paid a commission. Seventy-five per cent of mentees reported an increase in one or more of these areas.

Ninety-six per cent of mentees reflected that their time with their mentor had a positive impact on their business. Ninety-five per cent felt that their mentor understood their business.

Capital

In Phase 2, over 60% (64%) of mentees said they had not applied for capital from a formal institution. Most of those who did (85%) were successful. Those who did not apply reported that their business was too young or small to warrant capital. Others were concerned about high interest rates and being unable to pay back debt. Interviews suggested that these two issues were often present at the same time. Thirty-nine per cent had worked with their mentors to use existing resources more efficiently rather than seeking external financing.



Nor Hafizah Zakariah (left), founder of packaged food company, Food Industries, in Malaysia | Photo by Qualcomm Wireless Reach

Malaysian mentoring project

Through a partnership between the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, Qualcomm Wireless Reach and the Foundation for Women's Education and Vocational Training (YPVWM), over 200 women entrepreneurs in Malaysia were able to participate in the programme through a special project.

Before joining the programme, these women received ICT, English and business training. This allowed them to build the skills and confidence they needed to participate in, and benefit from, mentoring relationships. They also received tablets powered by Qualcomm Snapdragon™, a product of Qualcomm Technologies, Inc., to enable them to access the internet, engage with their mentors and access online resources. Wireless Reach provided funding for the programme, technical and project management support, and employees who served as mentors.

As part of the Phase 1 work,^{xii} the team reviewed data from a sub-set of Malaysian mentees. Compared with the rest of the sample, these mentees showed a particularly dramatic increase in communication skills (100%) and ICT skills (83%) by the end of the programme. They were also more than 25% more likely to have created a website than other mentees in the sample. They achieved a range of other outcomes, including 95% gaining business skills and 75% finding ways to access new markets, which mirrored those achieved by the rest of the mentees in the sample.

Mentor outcomes

The consulting team asked mentors to reflect on the ways in which they developed through the mentoring relationship, including whether they gained new knowledge or competencies, inspiration or cultural awareness. The majority of mentors (93%) reported a wide range of personal and professional benefits gained through the mentoring experience.

Mentor motivation

Mentors reported overwhelmingly positive experiences with the programme. Most said the best outcome was the personal satisfaction derived from watching their mentee develop, or gaining her friendship. This is reflected in mentors' motivations for joining the programme. Over 70% (71%) joined because they wanted to help women become independent, 79% said they wanted to apply themselves to something that would do some good in the world and 42% wanted to learn about entrepreneurship in different economies.

"I was truly elated to see how delighted she was seeing her website finally fully functioning, along with her work getting recognised from unexpected quarters."

Mentor growth

At Phase 1, 66% of mentors reported gaining skills and knowledge through the experience. Examples include improved communication, self-awareness and IT skills and improved ability to influence others.

At Phase 2, 93% of mentors reported that the programme had impacted their own personal and professional development. Forty-four per cent said they were applying mentoring techniques or active listening skills, 48% had gained a broader sense of the world's diversity, 21% said their own confidence had increased, 30% felt that they had grown as a leader and 24% said that their own job seemed more important and meaningful after participating in the programme. We would not expect all mentors to benefit in all areas and these results indicate the diverse ways that mentors can be impacted by a mentoring relationship.

"I have been able to think and influence colleagues and associates in a more subtle and effective way by trying to lead them to answers rather than simply telling them the answer or imposing it."

"Sometimes there were gaps in our sessions owing to other issues she had been facing and it required patience and understanding to help sustain this relationship at the same level as it was during her good times."

"I liked the whole web-based training at the beginning of the programme to make myself more conscious about managing people. I learned more about Kenyan/African working styles and how women are still part of traditional family structures."

Cultural appreciation

Mentors often reported that learning about a different culture and environment - especially the ways of doing business in that culture - gave them knowledge they did not previously have. Forty-eight per cent said they gained a broader sense of the world's diversity.

Gaining a broader appreciation of the challenges faced in particular regions and countries strengthened their ability to support others and face new challenges in their own professional lives. Mentors saw this as important in developing a transnational business perspective as well as being able to appreciate others' circumstances.

"The mentoring process taught me to relate to someone outside my own cultural context and to experience learning in a new environment. These are qualifications I might transfer to any new business challenges that might come up for me."



Van Dang, founder and CEO of software development company, Savvycom, in Vietnam | Photo by Chu Lan

Use of skills and inspiration

Mentors often appreciated discovering that their own skills and experience could prove useful to someone else. They also noted that their mentees inspired them and gave them a useful "reality check" on the challenges facing entrepreneurs. Twenty-four per cent reported that their mentees inspired them to take on new challenges, 24% finished the programme feeling like their own job was more important and meaningful and 18% said that overcoming obstacles with their mentees taught them flexibility in adapting to change.

"My cross-country fully online communication skills have definitely improved! Being my first mentoring activity, I definitely believe my mentoring skills have taken a leap ahead too. This has been my first foray into marketing, too, which has helped me get an exposure in it. These are surely some of the skills that I am already employing in my current role at work. Last but not least, my mentee's unrelenting drive and passion towards her business and her work ethic have been very encouraging and inspiring."

New business knowledge

Mentors were often stretched and challenged to learn about new businesses and markets, developing their understanding of the role that context and environment play in business development. Twenty-seven per cent felt that they were better able to communicate with people from different cultures or countries, 44% started applying mentoring or active listening techniques and 18% said they gained management skills.

"I learnt of a new market and different ways of operating. It was interesting to see that the same techniques can be applied to our markets, with small modifications."

"I saw totally different marketing skills for Africa, compared to Europe. It requires different strategic thinking to gain customers. Word of mouth is the main tool. It's a very different business/retail world."



Teena Manaf, founder of Teena Cut & Care hair and beauty company in Malaysia | Photo by Qualcomm Wireless Reach

Mentors' employers

In the interviews, some mentors reported feeling honoured to have been chosen for the programme. They appreciated having an employer who offered the mentoring opportunity and, as a result, held their organisation in higher regard.

To the degree that such programmes are undertaken by companies as a way to retain and enrich the experiences of valued employees, this programme seems to fulfil that goal. It does not seem to provide hard job skills – although the mentors do not seem to expect that it would – but it does provide opportunities for growth and learning in a range of areas that can feed back into the mentors' own work.

In their experience of advising companies that support mentoring initiatives, the consulting team has observed that mentoring initiatives can often produce benefits for the mentor's employer as well as the mentor, including by:

- Raising the issue and profile of gender diversity within the organisation;
- Heightening employees' appreciation of the network within which their business operates;
- Improving cultural awareness and appreciation of challenges and barriers associated with diversity;
- Creating a mentoring culture that supports employee growth and development and gaining exposure to high-quality mentoring practices;
- Supporting engagement and alignment with the employer;
- Promoting an entrepreneurial mind-set within the organisation.



Nina Patil | Photos by Atul Loke

Introducing Nina and Tracy

Nina and her husband run a company called Fresh Express Logistics, which exports locally-harvested grapes to Europe. As Nina lives in a drought-prone region of India, she is also working to collect, store and use rainwater and encourage her fellow farmers to take up responsible farming and water use practices.

Nina was facing challenges with marketing her products and handling clients and joined the programme to gain support in these areas. She was matched with Tracy, a research analyst and knowledge manager in Marsh & McLennan's risk management practice, based in the UK.

Relationship focus

Nina worked with Tracy to create an expansion strategy to help Nina widen her export base. As a result, Nina began exporting her products to the Balkans and started exploring opportunities in the UK, Ireland and Baltic region. Nina was often hesitant to make tough decisions, so Tracy supported her to build her confidence in this area.

As a result of securing new clients and accessing new markets, Nina's revenue grew by over 30% during her year in the programme and she was able to hire two new employees. She also used the programme's online forums to connect and learn from another mentor who works for a large international fruit distributor.

Nina's reflections

Nina reported that Tracy helped her think more objectively about her business. She also gained confidence to make tough decisions in her business, such as letting go of one customer whose business was proving unprofitable. She said, "Tracy has always been very encouraging and supportive. She asks all the right questions which get me thinking."

Since finishing the programme, Nina has established an association of 25 local farmers, and works with them to export their goods. She is also supporting 15-20 local women to get involved in farming. Nina regularly watches the programme's online webinars on business planning, branding, finance and digital marketing.

Tracy's reflections

Tracy also found great value in her mentoring experience and said she took away as much from their meetings as Nina did, especially conversations they had around making better-informed, pragmatic decisions. She said, "Nina's determination, commitment and pro-activeness has been inspiring. Participating in the programme has also been a timely reminder to step back and look at my own role and development."



Gina Vun | Photos by Suzanne Lee

Introducing Gina and Anette

Gina runs an online jewellery boutique called Exotic Borneo Treasures, which sells handmade indigenous products from Malaysia. With a background in education, Gina had visited rural villages and realised that many children were out of school because their mothers couldn't afford their school fees. She decided to create an online platform where these women could sell their products and earn money to support their families. However, without business skills or IT experience, she didn't know where to start.

Through a partnership between the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women and Qualcomm Wireless Reach, Gina received intensive training on business, ICT and English skills, as well as a tablet and a data plan to enable her to access the programme's online platform. She was matched with Anette, an entrepreneur from Sweden who founded her own management company and had significant expertise in business planning, IT and communications.

Relationship focus

Together, Gina and Anette wrote a business plan and strategised the most effective way to market Gina's business. With Anette's support, Gina developed the design and content of her new website. Using resources from the programme's online library, Gina also worked on her branding, created a marketing plan and launched social media accounts.

Throughout the year, Anette encouraged Gina to further empower the artisans she was working with by involving them in the development of the business. This not only developed the women's skills, but also helped Gina balance her workload and build her management skills. Over the course of the year, Gina successfully launched her business and started to turn a small profit.

She gained over 100 customers and sold products both domestically and internationally to the United States and Australia. Gina is currently working with 20 indigenous women and hopes to expand this number as profits increase.

Gina's reflections

Gina attributes her success to Anette's patience and support. She believes the biggest change has been the development of her leadership, communication and teamwork skills, which have helped create a collaborative work environment. She also commented, "The most valuable thing was the relationship we built; it has set me up for building other relationships in the future."

Anette's reflections

Anette said she built her communication skills and was inspired by Gina's passion. She said, "It's one thing to give advice to someone else, but then you have to think about what you do. I learned from Gina's responses – they made me think more strategically."





Mariela Lorenc Pacek | Photos by Nicolas Goldberg

Introducing Mariela and Eric

Mariela has worked in logistics in Argentina for nearly 20 years. However, as a woman in a male-dominated industry, she struggled to have her ideas heard and progress to a management role. Frustrated, she and two friends decided to launch their own company, Kalima Shipping and Logistics Solutions, which offers logistical support to freight and trucking companies, focusing, in particular, on women-run SMEs.

Mariela had been running her business for five years when she joined the programme in 2014. However, the recent import restrictions and devaluation of the Argentine peso made the business environment extremely challenging. She wanted a mentor to support her as she worked to keep her business afloat and secure new clients. Mariela was matched with Eric, a Senior Vice President at Bank of America in the United States, with expertise in marketing, sales and strategy.

Relationship focus

Mariela and Eric reviewed Mariela's branding and devised strategies to market her business more effectively. They thought through ways to refine Mariela's business pitch, which she used to attract potential partners at the Women Vendors Exhibition and Forum in Brazil.

Despite facing a challenging economic climate, Mariela managed to retain 50% of her existing customers and broker a new partnership with a woman-led firm in Brazil, which gave her ten new clients in the winery, spare parts, oil and gas industries. She also hired a new employee. In addition to her mentoring relationship, Mariela also took advantage of the programme's online platform and library of resources. She watched the programme's webinars on branding and pricing and applied the knowledge she gained to her marketing plan and website.



Mariela's reflections

Mariela feels she has become more confident in herself and her business as a result of her mentoring relationship. She has improved her English, her presentation skills and her ability to write professionally. Mariela dreams of becoming a leader in her industry and is setting up an NGO to support local artisans to export their goods to international markets. Now in their second year together, she said Eric's support has been invaluable and, *"when you get a mentor, then you want one for the rest of your life!"*

Eric's reflections

Eric has also improved his communication skills and is committed to learning Spanish. His role at work involves entering new markets so he has found learning about a new market very useful. Eric has also gained a broader perspective after working with Mariela. He explained, *"I have an appreciation for how difficult it is for women entrepreneurs in countries which do not have the legal or social structures to support them."*



Joy Catherine Birabwa | Photo by Will Boase

Introducing Joy and Sai

Joy runs After School Hub, an educational after-school programme based in Kampala, Uganda, which gives young people the opportunity to experiment, create and learn from their peers. As a mother of three, she found that schools did not offer many extracurricular activities, so she decided to create a space where children could develop their social and practical skills. The ethos of her After School Hub is 'learning beyond the classroom'.

Joy joined the Mentoring Women in Business Programme after struggling to move her enterprise forward while also working a full-time job and caring for her children. She was matched with Sai, a senior engineer at Qualcomm in the United States.

Relationship focus

The pair quickly built a strong relationship as Sai helped Joy to put plans and strategies in place to energise and grow her enterprise. They started by piloting a weekend programme of cooking classes from Joy's home. With Sai's support, Joy wrote a business plan, created a marketing strategy, distributed flyers to local schools and built a social media presence.

Joy's enterprise quickly secured local media attention and her weekend programmes became fully booked. Recognising the opportunity for growth, Joy moved to larger premises and developed a new 12-day holiday programme offering a wider range of activities, including sports and lessons on farming and basic hygiene practices. Keen for the children to interact with others from different backgrounds, Joy also facilitated volleyball games with children living in poorer areas.



Photo by Joy Catherine Birabwa / After School Hub

Joy has seen significant expansion during her time with Sai. When it started, just four children attended her after-school programme; now each holiday camp attracts over 25 children. She works with five part-time employees to run her camps and is looking to bring more seasonal employees on board for her upcoming programmes. She is developing partnerships with local organisations to offer additional activities such as training on cyber security for teenagers.

Joy's reflections

Joy believes that Sai has been instrumental in helping her build confidence and overcome her fear of failure. Sai also helped her to see the bigger picture and explore new options. She said, *"Without her, I would not have been able to move out of my shell, I would not have been able to give myself a chance to do what I love. I felt her cheer from miles away."*

Sai's reflections

Sai said she loved working with Joy and was inspired by her hard work and dedication. Mentoring Joy has taught her the value of being open to new ideas and remaining determined in the face of challenges. When Sai experiences difficulties at work, she often thinks of Joy and her tenacity.



Sofia Cruz del Río Castellanos (pictured right) | Photos by Rodrigo Cruz

Introducing Sofia and Katy

Working in the tourism industry, Sofia recognised the vital role that traditional handicrafts play in attracting visitors to Mexico and keeping its indigenous culture alive. However, she also observed that local artisans often work informally, far from tourist spots, and are significantly underpaid. Sofia established Mexikatekatl in 2013 to support artisans to supply their products to the Mexican tourist industry.

When Sofia joined the programme, she felt a great sense of responsibility for the artisans' livelihoods, but was unsure of how to grow strategically. She wanted a mentor to help her develop a financial plan, structure her operations and create a sustainable business model. Sofia was matched with Katy, a Corporate Social Responsibility Coordinator at Marsh & McLennan in Mexico, with a background in marketing, strategy and partnerships.

Relationship focus

Katy had strong knowledge of the social sector in Mexico and introduced Sofia to some key contacts. She also supported Sofia to write a business plan and strengthen her business model. The pair carried out a financial analysis and, after realising that Sofia was underselling, increased her prices to allow for a larger profit margin. They also explored expanding Sofia's services by offering artisans formal business training on how to market their own products.

Sofia has seen huge growth throughout the year. When she started the programme she had been running her business for a year and was selling products to ten companies. After her year of mentoring, she was working with over 100 local artisans and selling to 20 companies. As a result, her revenue doubled and she is on track to double it again in her third year of operation.

Sofia's reflections

Using the online forums made Sofia realise that she wasn't alone in facing challenges. She explained, *"The most valuable aspect is to be part of a community of female entrepreneurs. In Mexico there is a lack of connectivity in a community."* Sofia feels that she has become a more focused entrepreneur, and has strengthened her skills in a number of areas, including networking, marketing and management.

Katy's reflections

Katy relished her first mentoring experience and said it was definitely a two-way process. She felt that the relationship gave her insight into social entrepreneurship and helped inspire her in her own work. Most importantly, Katy said she has made a lifelong friend. She admires Sofia's passion and is truly inspired by everything she has accomplished.



Queen Mokulubete | Photo by Eric Miller

Introducing Queen and Shanda

In 2014, after spending 18 years in the South African mining industry, Queen launched her own company, Somila Engineering, a niche engineering company that manufactures and supplies specialised engineering products to a variety of industries including mining, rail and construction.

Queen had spent years being the only woman in the boardroom and felt passionately about getting more women and girls into STEM, so she felt it was time to make her mark. However, she faced challenges in the early phases of her start-up. As a new player, Queen needed to develop a clear product offering and secure repeat customers in order to compete with larger, more established competitors. Despite her considerable experience, Queen also struggled with the skills to promote the business.

Queen joined the programme a few months after launching her business. She wanted support to develop her products, improve her communication skills and secure new clients. She was matched with Shanda, a Credit Risk Approval Executive at Bank of America, based in the United States, with expertise in relationship building and communications.

Relationship focus

Queen and Shanda focused on defining and marketing Queen's product offering, developing a short YouTube video to showcase her services. Given that the mining industry was in a recession, Shanda and Queen also discussed strategies for attracting interest from other sectors.

Queen also used the programme's online forums to network with other women entrepreneurs. After learning about a specialist exhibition for women vendors via the forums, she successfully applied and received a full sponsorship to attend. The event, which was held in Brazil, provided a great platform for her to promote her company internationally.

Queen's business is progressing well: she secured a long-term contract with a multinational mining company and started generating revenue in the first quarter of 2016.

Queen's reflections

Queen's confidence has grown during her time in the programme. She now speaks up in business meetings and feels able to communicate and promote the business more effectively. She has also learned how to set clear goals with specific timeframes and break down the bigger picture into day-to-day tasks. Queen said that Shanda's support has, *"taken a huge weight off my shoulders and helped me to focus my energies"*.

Shanda's reflections

Shanda felt that supporting Queen has given her more confidence in her own skills and abilities. She also learned a great deal about the South African market and mining industry, and will be staying in the programme to support another mentee in 2016.



Photo by Queen Mokulubete



Celia Duron | Photos by Laura Lopez

Introducing Celia and Patricia

Celia, an entrepreneur from Honduras, is the founder of Inversiones Ecologicas, a company that creates products such as notebooks, gift bags and lampshades from recycled paper and agricultural waste. As a biologist, she was inspired to launch a business that increased awareness of the importance of recycling.

Celia faced challenges with quality control because her products are handmade and she did not have the machinery needed to process the paper. She also wanted to sell her products internationally, but did not have a business plan in place and her marketing plan was limited and outdated.

Celia was matched with Patricia, Managing Director at Bank of America, based in the UK. Patricia's background in finance and marketing made her a great match for Celia and they worked together for two successful years.

Relationship focus

Celia and Patricia built a solid budget and financial systems for Celia's business, which enabled her to keep track of her profits and losses, reduce costs and maximise her profits. They also finalised Celia's business plan – a huge step forward which enabled Celia to secure two grants. Patricia also supported Celia as she worked on creating a catalogue, pricing her products, looking at packaging options, negotiating deals with buyers and preparing pitches.

As a result, Celia was able to attract international customers at trade fairs. During her time in the programme, Celia's sales and revenue increased by 18% and 33%, respectively. She was also able to hire two new employees, who she is now mentoring herself.

Celia's reflections

Celia says that she has become more confident in her own abilities and her products, and is now able to see the bigger picture. She said, *"Working with Patricia gave me a different perspective; as a biologist, finance is not my strong point. Patricia helped me to track the financial performance of my business. It's great to have someone really far away, but at the same time so close, to help me with these things."* The pair are still in touch today and Celia has also worked with another mentor, Annalisa, in building her enterprise.

Patricia's reflections

Patricia reported that working with Celia enabled her to develop her communication and listening skills, and learn about doing business in a different culture. She also valued the programme's use of technology, saying, *"As everything is online, you can do it at your own pace. Because I work long days, I wanted to Skype someone at home in the evening so I could give her my undivided attention."* Patricia is now taking part in her third year in the programme.



Putri Hamzah | Photos by Qualcomm Wireless Reach

Introducing Putri and Philippe

Putri is the owner of This and That Enterprise, a home-based tailoring company which makes custom clothes for curvy women. Putri was inspired to establish the business because she struggled to find plus-sized clothes to suit her taste. After getting divorced and struggling to find a job to support her children, she took a sewing course at the Foundation's local partner in Malaysia, the Foundation for Women's Educational and Vocational Training (YPVWM), and made orders for friends and family. Seeing her potential, a local NGO equipped Putri with an industrial sewing machine, which enabled her to start her own label, Hatasia Curry.

Putri wanted a mentor to support her to learn more about making clothes on a larger scale. She also needed support with marketing her label and managing her finances. She was matched with Philippe, an Assistant Professor at the Lebanese American University in Lebanon. Thanks to support from Qualcomm Wireless Reach, Putri also received a tablet and data plan to enable her to connect with Philippe online and access the programme's online resources.

Relationship focus

Putri and Philippe explored ways Putri could sell her designs through Facebook and Instagram and increase her visibility online. The pair looked at Putri's financial planning and accounting, and worked to ensure that she was recording her profits and losses accurately. Putri describes Philippe as her *"pillar and voice of encouragement"*. The mentoring relationship helped improve Putri's communication skills and confidence, and enabled her to build stronger relationships with potential clients. Putri used the tablet to access information relevant to her line of business, watch training videos and promote her designs online.



During her time in the programme, her business went from having fewer than five clients to having over 30, many of whom are regular customers. As a result, Putri was able to build a regular income, and her revenue increased by 86%.

Putri's reflections

Putri faced some health concerns at the end of her year in the programme, which impacted her business and confidence. She found great encouragement in Philippe and the programme's online community, which helped her to rebound from these setbacks. Putri continues to try to grow her business and put the techniques she learned with Philippe into practice.

Philippe's reflections

Philippe learned about the culture and business environment in Malaysia. The mentoring experience also developed his communication and listening skills. He says, *"Putri deserves every success. She is a determined and passionate against all odds."*



Esperance Uwimana, founder of Women in Small Enterprises (WISE), which supports women owners of small businesses in Rwanda

Photo by Tom Gilks

Recommendations and areas for further exploration

Continued evaluation

Since this work began in 2014, the Mentoring Women in Business Programme has continued to refine its model and expand its reach. Though these initial cohorts of mentee-mentor graduates now represent a small sample from the programme’s overall reach, the results they achieved provide relevant insights and a valuable longitudinal view of the impact of mentoring. It would be useful to undertake further evaluation of programmatic outcomes in the future, as resources and funding allow.

Programme accreditation

Few mentoring programmes have formal accreditation. One of the most well-known standards is the International Standards of Mentoring Programmes in Employment (ISPME). The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women might consider carrying out a self-assessment based on the application criteria and applying for the formal award.

Communities of practice and online content

Mentees and mentors suggested the continued development of communities of practice. These working groups could bring together participants to discuss different industries, geographies or challenges (e.g., running a business while navigating a divorce). Some participants seemed unaware of the range of resources offered through the online platform, which suggests the need for continued promotion of existing resources among participants and alumni.

Review of non-starters

For early groups, the programme did not have a mechanism to quantitatively assess factors that prevented participants from graduating. Though the programme has now established this mechanism, due to the focus on specific cohorts and funding limitations, this report did not include a review of mentees and mentors who had to leave the programme early. This would be a useful point of exploration for future analysis.

Improvement of survey tools

The baseline data taken at the application stage contained a wide range of information, but some gaps existed due to survey design and technological glitches. The Phase 2 surveys aimed to fill these gaps. The consulting team provided insights on ways to improve the programme’s surveys, which the programme has since implemented. This will aid future analysis.

Mentor accreditation

The vast majority of mentors do not have a specific mentoring qualification. This does not mean that they are not ideally situated to provide mentoring support, but there could be value in offering accreditation to those mentors who are interested.

Conclusion

Worldwide, women experience substantial barriers to becoming successful business owners. They often face considerable adversity and risk in places where cultural, institutional and political norms do not support women’s entrepreneurship or economic activity.^{xiii}

Providing mentoring opportunities to women entrepreneurs in developing and emerging economies can support them to sustain and grow their enterprises, by increasing their access to the skills, knowledge and tools which are crucial to business success.

This report shows that the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women’s Mentoring Women in Business Programme is a unique programme within the field of entrepreneurship, generally, and in the specific context of women’s development.

Mentor and mentee feedback on the Mentoring Women in Business Programme suggests that the programme delivers benefits to both mentees and mentors. These findings support increasing recognition that formal and informal mentoring is associated with behavioural, attitudinal and career benefits for mentees and mentors.^{xiv}

Frequently, mentoring helps mentees become more aware of their potential; gain clarity about themselves and their business environment; and achieve greater self-belief, self-motivation, confidence and support to achieve their aspirations. Conversations with mentors help shift their perspective, and improve their knowledge and understanding. Mentoring also supports mentees to gain and develop skills which enable them to take their businesses to the next level of growth.

Mentors act as thought partners, helping to build their mentees’ confidence and encouraging them to find their own solutions to challenges. Regardless of background or position, mentors gain awareness of how people from different cultures or situations perceive and experience the world around them. This frequently results in mentors recognising how they can negatively and positively impact and support others, improving their ability to progress and achieve.

As mentors gain personal satisfaction from supporting their mentees, they are often energised by the experience and become lifelong advocates and supporters within the mentoring community. Some of the benefits that mentors experience can extend to their own work and, in turn, to the companies that employ them.

By unlocking the potential of women entrepreneurs in developing and emerging markets, and harnessing the talents of people in senior management and leadership positions, mentoring can be a powerful tool for the growth and development of individuals, businesses and wider society.



Yvonne Ujz, founder of Cybernet Plus internet café in Rwanda

Photo by Tom Gilks

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- ^x 26.7% of mentors and 17.9% of mentees did not respond to the final feedback questionnaire.
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Photography credits

FRONT COVER

Top left: Nina Patil, co-founder of Fresh Express Logistics, a grape-exporting company in India. Photo by Atul Loke.

Top right: Gina Vun, founder of Exotic Borneo Treasures, an online jewellery boutique in Malaysia. Photo by Suzanne Lee.

Bottom left: Gloria Kamanzi Uwizera, CEO of Glo Creations textile and design printing company in Rwanda. Photo by Tom Gilks.

Bottom right: Shuhada Hasim, founder of TAP Women photography company in Malaysia. Photo by Qualcomm Wireless Reach.

About the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women provides women with the skills, technology, networks and access to capital they need to become successful small and growing business owners, so that they can contribute to their economies and have a stronger voice in their societies.

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